



## ***West Nile Virus - Quick Facts***

### **What is West Nile Virus?**

West Nile Virus (WNV) was first found in the United States in New York City in the fall of 1999, and has rapidly spread throughout the country. It is commonly found in Africa, West and Central Asia, and the Middle East. It is not known how it was introduced into the U.S. The virus causes West Nile fever, which can infect humans, birds, horses and other animals, causing illness and in some cases, can be fatal.

### **Who is at risk of contracting West Nile Virus?**

The general population is at risk. Very young children, the elderly and individuals with immune compromised conditions are most at risk for serious illness.

### **How is the West Nile Virus transmitted?**

Humans contract WNV through the bite of an infected mosquito. It is not transmitted from person to person. The transmission cycle begins when certain species of mosquitoes feed on a bird carrying the virus in its blood. When the infected mosquito bites another bird, human, or animal, the virus is injected into the host's bloodstream, where it replicates and may cause illness.

### **Where is West Nile Virus found?**

West Nile Virus has been discovered throughout the United States. There have been no human cases of WNV found in the City of Long Beach. However, current surveillance suggests that the risk of contracting WNV exists throughout most of the United States.

### **When am I most at risk to contract West Nile Virus?**

Humans are most at risk when outdoors during dawn and dusk, which is peak mosquito biting time. Areas where there are standing or stagnant water, weeds, tall grass, and bushes also harbor mosquito activity.

### **Why should I be concerned about West Nile Virus?**

The Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report: "Most people infected with West Nile Virus will not develop symptoms. Some people experience a mild illness with fever, headache, body aches, skin rash, and swollen glands. In some cases, infection can result in West Nile encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain marked by headache, high fever, stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. A small number of cases have been fatal."

## ***West Nile Virus - Quick Facts***

### **What should I do to protect myself and family from contracting West Nile Virus?**

Avoid being bit by mosquitoes by using insect repellent when outdoors. Also wear protective clothing such as long sleeves, long pants, and socks. Repair broken or torn screens. Reduce mosquito-breeding sites by removing standing water: Clean clogged gutters, drain water from pool covers, dispose of water-holding containers, invert wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use, change bird bathwater regularly.

### **How can I avoid contact with mosquitoes?**

DHHS recommends precautions that residents should take to avoid infection and urges residents to clean up any pools of standing, stagnant water that can provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes that can carry diseases such as WNV.

Recommendations for keeping mosquitoes under control on resident's personal property are as follows:

- Dispose of anything that can hold standing water such as tin cans, discarded tires, and plastic containers.
- Drain or fill low spots in the ground and drill holes in the bottom of outdoor recycling containers to prevent moisture from collecting.
- Change water in birdbaths, decorative fountains and pet feeding bowls often.
- Clean clogged roof gutters regularly.
- Sweep standing water in gutters.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools regularly.

Residents should avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn or dusk, wear long sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors, ensure all operable windows are screened, and use insect repellent products with between 10%-50% DEET for adults. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends using products with a low concentration of DEET, 10% or less, on children aged 2 – 12 years. **Residents should follow instructions on the label.**

**Consult with your child's pediatrician for appropriate concentrations used on children under the age of two.**

### **What are the symptoms of infection with West Nile virus?**

Most people who are bitten by a mosquito infected with West Nile virus will not get sick. Approximately 5-15% of individuals will experience mild symptoms including headache, high fever, and fatigue. Less than 1% of individuals infected will become seriously ill with meningitis or encephalitis. Symptoms of meningitis and encephalitis are extremely variable but can include stiff neck, personality change, paralysis, seizures, and coma. Some people develop severe muscle weakness or paralysis.



## ***West Nile Virus - Quick Facts***

### **Is there a treatment for West Nile virus?**

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection or a vaccine to prevent it. Treatment of severe illnesses includes hospitalization to provide intensive supportive care, such as intravenous fluids and nutrition, respiratory support, and prevention of secondary infections. Persons who have symptoms suggesting severe illness should seek medical care as soon as possible.

### **Who should I call if I find a dead bird?**

An unusual die off of birds, especially crows, may be an early indication of WNV activity. The DHHS is asking for the community's help by reporting dead birds (most often crows) to 1-877-WNV-BIRD.

### **What if I have further questions?**

If you have concerns about persistent standing water in public areas such as curbsides, please call the DHHS' Environmental Health Bureau at (562) 570-4132 (8am to 5pm Monday - Friday) or call the City of Long Beach Public Works Department at (562) 570-2700.

For updated information on WNV activity in Long Beach, please call the DHHS' Information Line at (562) 570-4499.

To report dead birds, please call 1-877-WNV-BIRD.

### **Websites**

Long Beach DHHS:

[www.longbeach.gov/health](http://www.longbeach.gov/health)

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services:

[www.ladhs.org](http://www.ladhs.org)

California Department of Health Services:

[www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov)

Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

### **Vector Control Programs**

Long Beach DHHS Vector Control Program:

(562) 570-4090

Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District:

(562) 944-9656

Compton Creek Vector Control District:

(310) 639-7375